

STUDIES IN QUESTIONED DOCUMENTS: NUMBER THREE

LOGGED ENTRIES:
MADE SEPARATELY OR SEQUENTIALLY?

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ENTRIES: MADE SEPARATELY OR SEQUENTIALLY?

This article compiles signs for determining whether log, diary or similar entries are made separately as purported, or sequentially at one time. The term "log" will be used to include all related types of cases. The signs are drawn from works in the bibliography, personal experience, or application of general rules of the scientific observation of handwriting. One sign is specific to typewritten entries. Other signs, such as smudging patterns and sequence of lines, can apply to typed entries.

These signs are for the most part specific applications of general principles of handwriting observation. The most important of these will be stated briefly prior to the specific signs. They are based on Saudek's original research, supplemented by the work of others. Afterwards, some explanation of the more difficult of the specific signs will be developed.

The most important general principle is that each act of putting pen to paper begins a new act of writing. Each lifting of the pen or notable pause in its movement ends an act of writing. Attention to mechanics is strongest at the start of an act of writing and tends to lessen as the act continues, until gradually the writer focuses not on mechanics but on getting the message across to the reader.

The more notable the start, the stronger is the attention to mechanics. The beginning of a new logged entry is a major start of a brief act of writing. Therefore attention to mechanics is exceptionally strong and tends to be maintained at a higher level than normally. This is enhanced by the fact that logged entries are generally meant for extraordinarily important material which will be scrutinized. Thus speed is slow and deliberate, and letters are carefully formed for legibility and accuracy.

A continued act of writing, as mentioned, tends to focus attention less on mechanics and how the results will impress the reader and more on the content of the writing. It creates an impulse to finish the job expeditiously. Thus, when several logged entries are written sequentially at one sitting, speed increases through the entries, though with a tendency to recover mechanical accuracy at the start of each new entry. This recovery, however, tends to be less

efficacious with each new start, because the intensity of the inner impulse to communicate the message and complete the writing task grows stronger.

As the intensity of such internal impulse grows, the writing becomes faster, more expansive and more original, which can be expressed as less conforming to community standards of style and legibility. The thirteen primary and secondary signs of speed, which Saudek proved and defined, will appear more and more evident as the writing session proceeds. For example, pressure-emphasized down-strokes grow more pressured while less pressured up-strokes grow lighter yet.

In a slow, careful writing there is marked discontinuity between words and even between letters within words. In extreme cases, even strokes within letters will lack continuity. As writing speeds up, continuity increases, even across major portions of the writing, such as entry to entry. Some specific signs of increasing continuity are angular forms giving way to curved, ending strokes becoming tapered, and printed letters evolving into cursive, connected forms.

In the system of handwriting observation I use, which is a French system, all handwriting features are grouped under eight headings, called fundamentals. This provides a systematic method for integrating all signs for observation and analysis in a logical order. Any further principles of observations learned from any source can be easily integrated and related to those already used. One can also extrapolate to possible new signs. Finally, the organic relationship of all observations and signs used can be more easily discovered and understood.

These eight fundamentals, or categories if one prefers, are: Speed, Arrangement, Form or Style, Continuity and Form of Connection, Pressure (both grip and pen-point), Size and Proportion, Slant, and Base Line. Before studying these fundamentals, the analyst (whether a forensic or character handwriting analyst) must study evidence of the mechanics of the writing. One must know how to evaluate problems due to paper or pen quality, effects of posture in writing (logs written while standing or on a moving vehicle vs. seated at a stable, level surface, for example), traits due to unusual circumstances (such as pressure of a fast-paced work

environment vs. leisure writing at home), and similar situations.

Also of great importance is to ascertain the purported circumstances of the log's making. The analyst must understand what writing traits are or are not consonant with such circumstances and determine if they are or are not present. The exceptional analyst will be able to suggest further lines of inquiry to the client, if needed to uncover the full facts of the matter. An important part of this is knowing how to obtain proper exemplars, both collected and requested.

Some aspects of the investigation of logged entries, such as determination of the sequence of lines, cannot be explored in this article. However, the document examiner must realize such other knowledge and skills might be needed. If they are, one must possess them in order ethically to undertake the commission. Otherwise, refer the client to another examiner who, you are sure, can perform the work satisfactorily.

In 1996 a section titled "Additions to the Bibliography" was added. Some of these items are not specifically on document examination. However, the information they provide is excellent background knowledge for the understanding of the effects and implications of alteration of records. You will notice a large percentage have to do with medical records. This class of documents may be the largest single type subject to alteration, or at least the suspicion of alteration.

Studies in Questioned Documents

Logged Entries: Sequential?

1. MECHANICS OF WRITING MADE SEPARATELY

MADE SEQUENTIALLY

Various pens used

Same pen throughout

Corrections: various pens in various dates; and/or matching one used through same entry

Corrections: same pen various dates; different pens used in same entry

Usage soiling/smudging more in earlier entries; smudge/line sequence fits order of entries

Usage soiling/smudging same throughout or more later on; smudge/line sequence wrong

Ink smears on face of opposite page: on top of writing on left side page under writing on right side

Ink smears on face of opposite page with opposite pattern

Successive sheets match as to tear, dog-ear, stapling, etc.

Successive sheets break pattern of tears, etc.

Check any insertions in previously written text

How do insertions accommodate previously written text

Better than usual writing habits

Fits habits in other prolonged writings

Indented writing from one sheet to next: "carbon-sheet" sequence proper; not indicate change in order of sheets

Indented writing to next sheet: "carbon-sheet" sequence improper; indicates order of sheets has been changed

Obliterations, erasures, etc: fit with separate entries

Do not fit pattern of separate entries

Typing: same entry all aligned; same typewriter; different dates not same

Typing: same entry with various alignments; various dates with same alignment

1. MECHANICS OF WRITING, CONTINUED

MADE SEPARATELY	MADE SEQUENTIALLY
Different writing positions for different entries	Same writing position used throughout succeeding entries
Sequence of lines in overwriting fit expected pattern	Sequence of lines contradicts alleged sequence of entries
Correctly dated entries	Later date used, whether corrected or not
Printed form matches dates	Form printed later than date

Studies in Questioned Documents

Logged Entries: Sequential?

2. SPEED

MADE SEPARATELY

Deliberate, slow, careful

Motor sequence might differ
in succeeding entries

Signs of slowness coming
under other fundamentals

MADE SEQUENTIALLY

Increasing speed through
succeeding entries

Motor sequence maintained
through succeeding entries

Signs of speed coming under
other fundamentals

Studies in Questioned Documents

Logged Entries: Sequential?

3. ARRANGEMENT

MADE SEPARATELY	MADE SEQUENTIALLY
Horizontal alignment to preprinted space	Vertical alignment to previous entry
Each new entry carefully placed and aligned	Progressively changing alignment
Accuracy relative to pre-printed format	Increasing inaccuracy relative to pre-printed format or ignoring it
Accurate start at left margin or random left margin	Left margin drifts as in person's usual writing
Right margin not crowded	Right margin becomes crowded
Distances between words and lines in entries equal and measured	These distances in successive entries tend to pattern of person's usual writing; they become less equal and measured

Studies in Questioned Documents

Logged Entries: Sequential?

4. FORM

MADE SEPARATELY

Same person with various styles in various entries

Legibility and care with form

Angular forms maintained

Accuracy and precision in placing diacritics and punctuation

Conventional style dominates, especially print

MADE SEQUENTIALLY

Same writing style maintained through successive entries

Legibility and care with form progressively deteriorate through succeeding entries

Angular forms gradually give way to curved forms

Increasing inaccuracy and imprecision in placing diacritics and punctuation

Original style dominates, especially cursive or current

5. CONTINUITY AND FORM OF CONNECTION

MADE SEPARATELY	MADE SEQUENTIALLY
Discontinuity between entries	Continuity of movement across succeeding entries
Final stroke has no movement towards next entry	Final stroke has drag marks towards next entry
Equally spaced letters	Increasingly uneven or greater letter spacing
Stroke or letter impulse dominates	Word or sentence impulse dominates

Studies in Questioned Documents

Logged Entries: Sequential?

6. PRESSURE

MADE SEPARATELY

Firm, even pressure pattern

Beginning and ending
strokes tend to be blunt

MADE SEQUENTIALLY

Increasing difference in
pressure of up and down
strokes

Beginning and ending
strokes tapered

Studies in Questioned Documents

Logged Entries: Sequential?

7. SIZE AND PROPORTION

MADE SEPARATELY

Regular and consistent as
to individual features/
zones and between
features/zones

Consistency in height,
width and ratio, favoring
narrow

MADE SEQUENTIALLY

Irregular and inconsistent,
more so as writing
progresses

Inconsistency and expansion
increasing

Studies in Questioned Documents

Logged Entries: Sequential?

8. SLANT

MADE SEPARATELY

Vertical or reclined
favored

Vertical strokes parallel

Entries consistent within
self but vary from
succeeding entries

No reverse slant

MADE SEQUENTIALLY

Increasingly inclined slant

Vertical strokes diverge

Entries have consistency
across succeeding entries
and variation within self

Reverse slant as speed
grows

Studies in Questioned Documents

Logged Entries: Sequential?

9. BASE LINE

MADE SEPARATELY

Adherence to printed base
line or at least related to
it

Level and not fluctuating

MADE SEQUENTIALLY

Gradual divergence from
printed base line

Wavy and/or directional
slope, especially rising as
speed increases

10. OTHER POINTERS

(1) EXEMPLARS

Other similar written records the person keeps or contributes to can serve to define personal, individual habits in logged entries. Possible exemplars are:

- A. Appointment books: personal or at work;
- B. Address books: personal or at work;
- C. Check book entries: personal or at work;
- D. Employment sign-in sheets;
- E. Accounting records: personal or at work;

F. Inquire about other logs, diaries, etc. person might use now or has used in the past, such as tax records, phone call lists, personal diary;

G. Also check person's regular writings for comparison between habits of continuous writing with features of purported non-continuous entries.

- (2) Purported customs of writer indicated by suspect log: are they backed up by other activity?
- (3) Do others know of the person's habits in log or diary keeping?
- (4) Can the person explain any discrepancies discovered by the examiner of the document?
- (5) Ask person to explain any obliterations, erasures, etc. Will the restoration of the text back up the explanation?
- (6) Who else knew of the activity of keeping the log? Who else used the log? Interview these persons for verification of the first person's story and for clues for further inquiry.

Studies in Questioned Documents

Logged Entries: Sequential?

- (7) Do pens, etc. used in the questioned log match those used on other writing at that time and place? Or at another time or other location? For example, black ink used in the questioned log, blue in all else at that time, but black used for everything at a later date.
- (8) Where did the person obtain the log? Can that be verified?

11. EXPLANATION OF SOME SIGNS

For the most part, a pattern of several signs are needed for a conclusion of falsity. Few clues, such as a form printed after the purported date of the entry, singly indicate falsity. In any case, do as full a check as possible in the circumstances. Even act as your own adversary: try to prove your conclusions wrong.

(1) MECHANICS OF WRITING.

Soiling or smudging would increase the more a log is read and the more the users have soiled hands. Laboratory inspection might discover if smudge/writing sequences are consonant with the purported making of the log. For example, if the same smudge is on top of one writing but under another supposedly done at the same time, there is some time lapse between them. Likewise, if two writings supposedly done separately are on top of the same smudge, it would not prove falsity but would raise suspicion.

There are no hard and fast rules for determining suspicion or falsity from insertions. Determine the sequence as best as you can, then see if those indications are consonant with the purported making of the document.

What I mean by "carbon-sheet" effect is writing on one side of a page and thereby forcing ink or pencil writing on the other side to transfer to the sheet underneath. An example of how it could indicate a later insertion of text is this. A person inserts text on a page of a finished log. That presses pencil graphite on the reverse of the sheet onto the top of writing on the page below, which page was written prior to the entry the graphite of which is now on top of it in a trace amount.

To discover such trace amounts of writing medium transferred by this "carbon-sheet" effect or embossments from writing on a page above, the examiner must give the entire document a careful, millimeter-by-millimeter search under magnification and good lighting.

In these pointers, as in almost all those given, it is assumed you have access to the original document. Obviously, copies will never indicate such subtle and non-reproducible things as embossment. Other evidence will also be lost, diminished or distorted. False evidence can also be added! The pitfalls in document examination from a photocopy are many and would need another full article to describe them all and the measures to counter them.

Obliterations and erasures also might not be discernible from a copy. They may also require sophisticated laboratory equipment to uncover. The methods of their discovery and restoration could fill a large book!

To be able to deduce writing position, posture and grip from the handwriting is difficult. But the examiner must gain some basic knowledge, at least enough to know when to be wary. It is normal for logs to show variations in these things. In fact, extended entries with no evidence of changes in writing position, posture or grip should rouse suspicions that the examiner will want to settle with reasonable explanations.

Again, determination of posture and grip and of the sequence of crossing lines are major topics requiring as much treatment as the examination of logs does. Sequence of lines also might require sophisticated equipment, and it is fraught with many false indications for the unwary and superficial observer.

(2) SPEED.

I do not think one has any business doing professional handwriting analysis, whether forensic or character, without a basic mastery of Saudek's signs of speed. With such mastery, you can determine not simply whether a writing is fast or slow, but also why it is so, based on the mechanics of writing, and how and at what point the speed alters. Further, speed may be fast either because of fluency and efficiency or because of physical momentum, the two not being necessarily concurrent.

(3) ARRANGEMENT.

Distinguish between use of space within letters and words and use of space between words and lines and for placement of the writing on the page. Use of space within letters comes under Size and Proportion, while between letters within words it comes under Continuity and Form of Connection. Different, though related, impulses and mechanics account for these three uses of space.

(4) FORM.

No special explanations are needed for these signs.

(5) CONTINUITY AND FORM OF CONNECTION.

Continuity of the writing movement is altered or broken by any alteration or break in any writing feature. For example, if in writing "mummy" the person rounds out and widens the first two humps of small "m" and narrows and angles the third, that third hump breaks the flow and rhythm, thus disrupting continuity. Habits of discontinuity are very unconscious and personal and difficult to alter, which is why they are so serviceable in handwriting identification.

To focus on the topic of logged entries, these same habits are directly related to both speed and the capacity of the writer to compose segments of writing (phrases, sentences, lines, paragraphs) as single acts of expression. The conscious effort at accuracy in writing mechanics, such as perfect legibility, and the expression of groups of words as single writing acts are incompatible. Only the most skilled and disciplined of writers achieve virtually perfect legibility without conscious effort, while making even entire passages as one unified writing act.

(6) PRESSURE.

Though most writing instruments give darker lines when applied with more pressure, examination of a copy requires utmost care in estimating pressure. Even the most assured conclusions might require study of the original for final confirmation. Be sure to determine the kind of writing instrument used if at all possible. Also, from a copy you can hardly ever tell whether or not different writing instruments were used.

(7) SIZE AND PROPORTION.

Bear in mind that, like Continuity and Form of Connection, ratio of sizes within and among letters is a very unconscious habit. It also is quite apt to reflect the speed and spontaneity with which a writing was done.

(8) SLANT.

These signs are virtually all signs of speed and slowness determined by Saudek. Under "MADE SEQUENTIALLY" you are looking for an increasing variation along the lines indicated. That is, down-strokes, for example, will begin fairly parallel as we were taught to make them in school, but they gradually develop more and more conflict of slant.

"Entries have consistency across succeeding entries and variation within self." By that I mean that any given entry will show more variation in slant than authentic logged entries will show. The authentic entries, though, will likely show divergent patterns, being done in various writing positions, postures and grips and under different circumstances. However, the entries made in series at the same time will have the same pattern of variations, exhibiting evidence of the same writing posture, position and grip.

(9) BASE LINE.

The discussion under Slant applies to Base Line.

(10) OTHER POINTERS.

The subject of proper exemplars is another topic which would require extensive treatment to be covered justly. Not only are there technical considerations, but often legal considerations might invalidate an otherwise excellent document examination. The examiner must realize the provisions of applicable law and discuss any doubtful areas with the attorney. The suggestions given assume a grasp of the task of collecting exemplars.

An ability to bring avenues and suggestions of further investigation to the attention of the attorney seems to me to be a necessary aspect of our work. If the examiner does not have enough sense to know what new questions are brought up by the discovered facts or what the possible pitfalls are for the client's pursuit of justice, is the examiner fulfilling the ethical, or even the legal, obligation undertaken?

12. CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have attempted to give the most comprehensive treatment of the subject possible. I have also tried to indicate what other studies might be needed for the solution of special problems. It is vitally necessary for any professional to be completely honest with self and clients as to the limitations of one's knowledge, skill and available tools to do a job. Just as medical doctors do, we should expect it of ourselves as professionals to have specialties and to refer certain problems to those with the requisite specialty.

The bibliography gives what I believe to be the best works to start with for a more in-depth study of the subject of logs. Hopefully this treatment will provide an outline into which other points you find of value can be integrated. Thus the article can be of permanent, practical value to you.

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